

FAA Background Information Regarding U.S. Civil Aviation - Kenya

Due to cross-border extremist/militant activity originating from Somalia, there is a risk to U.S. civil aviation operating into, out of, within, or over the territory and airspace of Kenya at altitudes below Flight Level (FL) 260. As a result, on February 26, 2017, the FAA published Notice to Airmen KICZ A0003/17 advising U.S. civil aviation to exercise caution when flying into, out of, within, or over the territory and airspace of Kenya at altitudes below FL260.

While primarily active in Somalia, al-Shabaab, an al-Qa'ida-affiliated terrorist group, is the predominate extremist/militant concern and has demonstrated the capability and intent to conduct attacks in Kenya targeting government, civilian, and Western interests, to include aviation interests. Al Shabaab possesses, or has access to, small arms; indirect fire weapons, such as mortars and rockets; and anti-aircraft capable weapons, including man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS). Such weapons could target aircraft at low altitudes, including during the arrival and departure phases of flight, and/or airports and aircraft on the ground. MANPADS vary in degree of capability and required knowledge to operate. Of these, some MANPADS have the capability to reach a maximum altitude of 25,000 feet. Al-Shabaab has previously demonstrated the capability and intent to use MANPADS they possess, against aviation.

In January 2014, al-Shabaab demonstrated their capability and intent to target aviation interests in Kenya when operatives attempted an improvised explosive device (IED) bombing outside of the terminal at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (HJKJ) in Nairobi. In neighboring Somalia, al-Shabaab has conducted multiple attacks targeting civil aviation flights and infrastructure, including multiple ground assaults on Mogadishu International Airport and weapons fire against aircraft operating at low altitudes. Al-Shabaab maintains the capability to develop concealed IEDs which puts civil aircraft flights in the region at risk. In February 2016, al-Shabaab targeted a flight departing Somalia en route to Djibouti, Daallo Flight 159, through the use of an insider who smuggled a concealed IED onto the aircraft.

Although these attacks by al-Shabaab align with their media statements of intent to conduct terror attacks in retaliation for Kenya's counter-terrorism operations in Somalia as part of the African Union Mission in Somalia, the US Government assesses that counterterrorism pressures since early 2015 have probably degraded al-Shabaab's ability to conduct high-profile attacks against hard targets outside of Somalia.

As a result, there continues to be a potential risk to U.S. civil aviation operating in Kenya. U.S. operators and airmen should exercise caution when operating in the territory and airspace of Kenya below FL260.

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